



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

July 10, 2013

Media Contact: Charlotte Sellmyer
(202) 226-8417

**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)
Committee on Homeland Security**

“Assessing Attacks on the Homeland: From Fort Hood to Boston”

**July 10, 2013
Remarks as Prepared**

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing today. This is an open hearing and today we will vote on convening a closed session tomorrow to receive classified testimony from DHS and the National Counterterrorism Center. Unfortunately, the FBI has refused to appear, and continues to refuse this Committee’s appropriate requests for information and documents crucial to our investigation into what happened in Boston.

Three months ago, there was a terrorist attack in our country, and it is this committee’s responsibility to find out how we did not see it coming. What concerns me greatly is that the problem at the heart of preventing the Boston bombings – the failure to share information – is being witnessed now in this very room. The information requested by this Committee belongs to the American people. It does not belong solely to the FBI, and I sincerely hope they do not intend to stonewall our inquiry into how this happened. I said when I started this investigation that we were going to find out what happened, what went wrong and how to fix it, and I will not be satisfied until we get the answers that the American people deserve.

As Dzhokar arrives in court today, justice is just beginning. Today, we turn to making sure what he did, is prevented from ever happening again.

Just weeks ago, I walked the streets of Boston with my colleague Bill Keating, and while the city’s resilience and strength were obvious everywhere we went - how this attack could have occurred in spite of multiple warnings was still not clear.

In many ways, the Boston bombings serve as an assessment of our counterterror efforts over a decade after 9/11, and our investigation will look at how far we have come, and what must be changed to better protect our homeland. Today, by looking at other domestic terror attacks on our soil in addition to the Boston bombings, we seek to identify systemic vulnerabilities in our defenses which could have helped prevent these attacks, and future threats.

Since 9/11 the great challenge to our vast homeland security apparatus remains connecting the dots. While much information is available, we must ensure that we have the best system possible for sharing intelligence, particularly when information so clearly warrants additional scrutiny, as it did with Tamerlan Tsarnaev. In this case, while the FBI had investigated the older suspect, his case was not reopened after his travel overseas to a hotbed of jihadist terrorism. Ultimately, as we refine our post-9/11 counterterror policies, this type of failure to follow-up must not continue.

This is particularly important as the Administration seeks to return to a pre-9/11 approach to fighting terrorism on our soil – a policy perpetuated by its narrative that the conflict with radical Islamists is ending.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric perpetuated by the Administration that the threat of al Qaeda is diminishing, and that its franchises are less dangerous, is not the reality that the United States faces today. For evidence of this, look to the latest edition of al Qaeda's Inspire magazine which praised the Tsarnaev brothers and encouraged other extremists to conduct similar attacks.

Terrorists within the U.S., who are inspired by jihadist rhetoric present a new and dynamic threat and must not be looked at as any less deadly than those abroad. In light of Boston, it is more important than ever to find weaknesses in our counterterror efforts that can be fixed before another attack is attempted.

By reviewing the events leading to the last five attacks on the homeland since 9/11, we will find patterns that will shed light on what we must improve.

In June 2009, a terrorist targeted an Army-Navy Career Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, killing one soldier and wounding another. Carlos Bledsoe, an American citizen, converted to Islam and spent 16 months in Yemen at a jihadist training camp. Bledsoe had been interviewed by the FBI twice before the shooting, once in Yemen and then again in Nashville. While law enforcement agencies were concerned he may have ties to extremist groups, they did not pursue the matter.

The shooting at Fort Hood in November 2009, is another example of government officials either failing to recognize, or failing to pursue, a credible threat. There were signs Major Nidal Hasan had become radicalized, but his superiors failed to discipline or discharge him. The FBI was

aware Hasan was communicating with the terrorist Anwar al-Awlaki a year prior to his attack on Fort Hood, where he killed thirteen people and wounded 43 others, but ultimately this information was not shared with Fort Hood.

The 2009 attempted attack on a Detroit-bound plane Christmas Day is yet another example of agencies failing to connect the dots. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's father reported his son's extremism and hatred of the West to the US Embassy, but one agency failed to alert another.

The Times Square bomber, Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized US citizen born in Pakistan, was placed on the Traveler Enforcement Compliance, or "TECS" System between 1998 and 2008. However, this computer system does not share information effectively among databases and consequently Shahzad fell off the radar screen and only luck prevented the bomb from going off.

Finally, the Boston Marathon bombings show that when agencies fail to share critical information about terrorists, they fail to see the full picture – which could point to an eminent attack. We still do not know if the FBI was alerted to Tamerlan's travel overseas, but we do know that no action was taken after the fact, and the Deputy Director of the FBI said that even if they had been notified about the travel, the case was closed and would not have been reopened.

These events bring to light two areas that deserve scrutiny by this committee. The first being whether information is still being stove-piped between agencies, and the second being whether our agencies need to update their policies in order to be nimble enough to confront the current dynamic terror threat to this country.

It is easy to see why this absolutely must be done when you read the words of our enemy in the most recent issue of AQAP's Inspire Magazine, which praise the Tsarnaev brothers. In one segment, a poem written under the name "Tamerlan 2" declares:

"Brother residing in the West, grab your chance and walk steadfastly towards your goal. As for me here in Yemen, whenever I move around with explosive around my waist, I wish I am in America."

Those chilling words make it clear that our enemies applaud the actions of Tamerlan and Dzhokhar and they will try again.

We must be better prepared.

#